

**Georgia State Advisory Council on
Early Childhood Education and Care**

Outline of Application for Federal Funds

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) allocates \$3,476,312 to Georgia to aid the work of its State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. The Council's purpose, as articulated in the Executive Order creating it, is to serve the more than 700,000 children under the age of five in Georgia by "planning better coordinated systems, facilitating working relationships among essential partners, and moving toward integrated delivery of services to young children and their families." To access the federal funding, Georgia must prepare and submit an application to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) articulating its plans to use the funds. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning has been designated as the lead agency for purposes of the application.

In the initial briefing paper provided to Council members, we outlined the application process and described some of the issues that applications must address. Based on the discussions at the Council's initial meeting November 16, we have prepared an outline of the application for federal funds. This outline draws on the briefing paper for the November 16 meeting but is also based on the Council's articulated directions and is organized around the requirements of the federal grant application. It also includes more detailed action steps for the Council's follow-up. While there are numerous technical requirements that the application will ultimately have to meet, our initial focus here is on identifying the major categories of work, including some proposed activities that the \$3.476 million should be used to fund.

A separate document will propose a more detailed budget for the Council's activities, nesting the proposal within a host of other initiatives already underway in Georgia that serve the same population. The Council's funds are limited but significant and can have their greatest impact if they help the state build on work currently in progress.

I. Executive Summary

This paper is intended to serve as a blueprint for the application Georgia will file with HHS. The key points in this paper include the following:

Federal Application Requirements

- Federal law has defined a set of application requirements for Georgia to access its allocated \$3.476 million, which include the creation of a strategic report to guide the work, a plan to complete a needs assessment, and a set of specific outcomes and activities that the grant would fund.

Young Children and Services in Georgia Today

- Georgia is a state with a high percentage of young children, who are – compared to other states – disproportionately low-income and mobile.
- Georgia has had great success braiding the funding streams for state pre-k and Head Start, and hundreds of providers offer the programs in blended classrooms. This allows for more children to receive service, and has helped lead to Georgia being one of the few states where Head Start serves a higher percentage of three year olds than four year olds (a configuration responsive to Head Start's needs assessment). Child care in Georgia is primarily center- and family-based and licensed, and the state recently has moved to upgrade the quality requirements for providers.

Georgia's Action Agenda for Young Children

- Georgia plans to use the grant to achieve three primary objectives: (1) Improving program quality; (2) Empowering parents; and (3) Unifying and coordinating our data.
- Georgia will develop a comprehensive plan for service to young children that will define a vision for serving young children and their families in Georgia, assess the ability of current programs to meet that vision, and articulate a roadmap for getting from where the state is to where it wants to go.
- Georgia will work to empower parents by providing them more information about available services and to help them understand how best to work with program providers.
- Georgia will design a unified early learning data system that will capture appropriate information about young children served by federal and state funded programs – and appropriate information about the providers and programs that serve them. The system will be able to provide parents, providers, researchers, and policymakers with the information they need to answer their most important questions about child outcomes.

II. Federal Application Requirements

A. The Council's Statutory Obligations

The Head Start Act requires the Council to undertake the following activities:

- conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the State;
- identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs;
- develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
- develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the State;
- develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State;
- assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or prekindergarten program; and
- make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.

42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(1)(D)(I)-(VII). These will be the responsibilities of the Council throughout its lifetime, including after all initial grant funds have been expended.

B. The Application for HHS Funds

1. Statutory Requirements

The Head Start Act authorizes grants to:

facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school preparedness through one or more of the following activities:

- (i) promoting school preparedness of children from birth through school entry, including activities to encourage families and caregivers to engage in highly interactive, developmentally and age-appropriate activities to improve children's early social, emotional, and cognitive development, support the transition of young children to school, and foster parental and family involvement in the early education of young children;
- (ii) supporting professional development, recruitment, and retention initiatives for early childhood educators;
- (iii) enhancing existing early childhood education and development programs and services (in existence on the date on which the grant involved is awarded), including quality improvement activities authorized under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990; and
- (iv) carrying out other activities consistent with the State's plan and application[.]

42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(2)(A). The statute requires the state to create a strategic report guiding the work, and to identify goals for increasing the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.

2. HHS Application Requirements

In addition to numerous technical requirements, the following are the key points made by the HHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in its guidance on applying for the federal funds:

- *Project Description*: "ACF is particularly interested in specific project descriptions that focus on outcomes and convey strategies for achieving intended performance. Project descriptions are evaluated on the basis of substance and measurable outcomes, not length."
- *Objectives and Need for Assistance*: "Clearly identify the physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, and/or other problem(s) requiring a solution. The need for assistance must be demonstrated and the principal and subordinate objectives of the project must be clearly stated. Any relevant data based on planning studies or needs assessments

already conducted should be included or referred to in the endnotes/footnotes. In the absence of such data, describe the current status of the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry in the State; the existing need for coordination and collaboration among early childhood development programs and services for children from birth to school entry in the State, as well as the existing status of State early learning standards, governance, professional development, and data systems. Incorporate demographic data and participant/beneficiary information, as needed."

- *Approach:* "Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. . . . Address each of the three years of the grant period and describe goals, objectives, activities and timelines for accomplishing each responsibility of the State Advisory Council. . . . Provide a plan for conducting the required periodic needs assessment, for holding public hearings to provide opportunities for public input in the activities of the State Advisory Council, and for holding State Advisory Council meetings for each year of the three-year grant period."

The purpose of this document is to outline how Georgia will file an application that fulfills all of these requirements while defining a Georgia-specific vision for improvement that will maximize the leverage of the federally allocated funds.

III. Background: Young Children and Services in Georgia Today

A. Young Children in Georgia

Georgia's population is younger, lower-income, and more mobile than the population of most states. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the state has an overall population approaching 10 million, making it one of the largest states in the nation. Significantly, 7.65% of its population is under the age of five, the fifth-highest percentage among the 50 states (and the highest of any state east of the Mississippi River).

Poverty is a real challenge for Georgia's children. Twenty-six percent of Georgia's young children live below the poverty line, a higher percentage than for the nation as a whole (24%). Financial issues in Georgia are urban, suburban, and rural; indeed, in all three areas the percentage of children who are low income is higher than the national average. In urban areas, 58% of Georgia's young children are low income (compared to 52% nationally); in suburban areas, 38% (36%), and in rural areas, 67% (53%). Many of these children are children of the working poor – 55% of Georgia's low income parents have full-time, year-round employment, higher than the 47% national average.ⁱ

In addition, Georgia's mobility rate is high. Georgia ranks 7th among states in sending residents to other states and 4th in receiving residents from other states.ⁱⁱ All told, 28%

of Georgia's low-income young children have moved recently well above the national average of 21%.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our knowledge of the conditions facing Georgia's young children compels us to act to improve the services provided them and their families.

B. Services for Young Children in Georgia

The three primary education and care programs serving Georgia's children are state pre-k, child care, and Head Start; a description of each is provided below.

Another important funding stream for young children is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), only two states serve a lower percentage of three and four year olds through special education preschool than the 3.2% served in Georgia. Better service to children identified for special education is an important element of the Council's work.

Each of these programs plays a major role in school readiness and will be a full partner in the work of the Council. The Council recognizes that these programs will need to work not only with each other but with many other health and human services provided through federal and state funding. The Council is also committed to appropriately supporting those parents who choose not to enroll their children in government-funded programming or programming outside the home.

1. State Pre-K

Georgia's Pre-K Program is one of the nation's oldest, largest, and best. According to the annual survey by NIEER, only two other states serve a higher percentage of their four year olds in state pre-k. Children are served for 6.5 hours per day, five days a week, and the program is open to all regardless of income. Programs are provided in a mixed delivery system, including the public schools and a range of private providers.^{iv} The program serves 81,136 children; 32,401 (39.9%) are white, 30,688 (37.8%) are black, and 10,542 (13%) are Hispanic. More than half of the children (54.9%) are considered economically at risk.

Georgia has long been aware of the need to provide infrastructure supporting the local delivery of quality pre-k. The state has done substantial work to develop content standards that all providers must use. Georgia also has piloted and is now implementing a statewide Pre-K Child Assessment based on the Work Sampling System, and teachers have been trained in the assessment's use. In addition, the state's efforts to improve inter-rater reliability have led to better and more consistent state oversight. Unique identifiers are assigned to children in state pre-k (both public and private settings) that follow the child through the state's longitudinal data system. Georgia's Pre-K Program currently meets nine of the 10 quality benchmarks developed by NIEER.

2. Child Care

Child care in Georgia is provided primarily by licensed, center-based caregivers. Of young children enrolled in fee for service or subsidized child care programs in Georgia, the percentage in center-based care (85%) and licensed care (97%) is substantially higher than the national averages (61% and 76%, respectively).^v The population of preschool children in child care also skews young with 35% of birth to two year olds enrolled (compared to a national average of 30%) and 33% of three to five year olds enrolled (compared to a national average of 35%).^{vi} The great majority of children in Child Care & Development Fund subsidized child care are from single-parent families – 92.6%, according to September 2009 data from the Department of Human Services. The Department also reported that the vast majority of children in subsidized child care are black (78.9%).

While a high percentage of Georgia's subsidized child care is in centers and offered by licensed providers, historically Georgia's requirements for licensed care have been among the nation's least restrictive. The staffing ratios and maximum group sizes allowed in Georgia have been among the most permissive in the 50 states, and Georgia has also been behind other states in its pre-service requirements for providers.^{vii} Recently the state has undertaken administrative changes to its child care quality requirements, with the goal of providing a better experience and quality for the children enrolled.

3. Head Start

Head Start is a federal-to-local program with a long history of serving children in the greatest need and providing comprehensive services beyond classroom education. The profile of Head Start enrollees in Georgia is rather unusual in that Georgia is one of only a handful of states to serve a higher percentage of its three-year-old cohort than of its four-year-old cohort.^{viii} The percentage of three year olds served is slightly above the national average, but the percentage of four year olds served has been low by national standards.^{ix} The success of the state's four year old preschool program and its successful partnering with Head Start through a collaborative delivery model is a major factor in that percentage as it has an effect on Head Start's needs assessment.

Recent national data shows that Head Start in Georgia serves a population that is disproportionately black compared to other states. In Georgia 69% of Head Start enrollees are black, compared to 29% nationally.^x On the flip side 21% of Georgia's Head Start children are white (compare to 39% nationally), and 19% are Hispanic (36%).^{xi} The percentage of children in Georgia Head Start who are primarily Spanish speakers is also much lower than the national percentage – 12% to 26%.^{xii} Georgia for many years has had one of the nation's highest percentages of black residents, and while in the 1990s Georgia had one of the nation's fastest-growing Hispanic populations, the state as a whole still has a lower-than-average percentage of Hispanic residents.^{xiii}

Finally, the percentage of Head Start enrollees in Georgia from a single-parent family (74%) is markedly higher than the national percentage (57%).^{xiv}

4. Coordination of Services

Georgia's State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care is brand new – it was created by executive order of Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue on September 30, 2009. However, the Council builds on a tradition of collaboration in Georgia's government and on a recognition that agencies and programs must work together to improve outcomes for children.

Georgia is one of only a few states to have a stand-alone agency with authority over early childhood programs. In 2004, Governor Perdue and the General Assembly created Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Bright from the Start is designed to serve the needs of children aged birth through five and their families. Its services include state pre-k, child care for young children, federal nutrition programs (the Child and Adult Care Food Program [CACFP] and the Summer Food Service Program [SFSP]) and Head Start. Bright from the Start is the lead agency in Georgia's State Advisory Council funding application.

In addition to focusing on the special needs of young children, Georgia has recognized that education is a lifelong process beginning at birth and continuing through higher education. Governor Perdue created an Alliance of Education Agency Heads, which addresses the educational needs of students throughout their careers. The Alliance is chaired by Kathy Cox, Georgia's elected State Superintendent of Schools; it also includes Commissioner Dr. Holly Robinson of Bright from the Start and the five other education agency heads in Georgia.

Georgia has also recognized that to serve children properly requires an effort beyond traditional education agencies, and the First Lady's Children's Cabinet has brought together representatives from education, health, human services, and juvenile justice agencies to work together on behalf of Georgia's children. First Lady Mary Perdue has made children her primary policy focus for the last seven years. Governor Perdue's executive order creating the Council requires that its work be aligned with that of the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, and several members of the cabinet are active participants in the Council.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and its Commissioner, B.J. Walker, have also played a leadership role in serving young children. The agency supports a wide range of services for families and children, including child care. The participation of DHS in the Council's work will help solidify the Council as a forum for collaboration among education and human services agencies and providers.

The Council's work will build on the progress already made in Georgia. One new dimension that the Council will bring is more formal collaboration between state government and its outside partners. Parents are the most important force in the life of a young child, and while state government can play a valuable role in supporting parents and children, it cannot and should not do that alone. The Council brings together a diverse group of leaders from multiple professional fields and from all across the state, united by a common passion: improving outcomes for young children in Georgia.

IV. Georgia's Action Agenda for Young Children

Georgia's action agenda recognizes that improving outcomes for children will demand a collaborative approach and a real commitment of time and energy. The purpose of this action agenda is to provide a framework for that commitment of time and energy and to ensure that our efforts lead to real policy change. This outline of the action agenda is divided into three sections: (A) The Council's objectives for the grant; (B) Georgia's strategies for increasing the number of children entering school ready to learn; and (C) the activities the Council can undertake in support of its strategies, including the activities to be funded through the HHS grant.

A. The Council's Objectives for the Grant

1. What the Council Intends to Accomplish

The Council's primary objectives for its grant fall into three broad categories: (1) Improving program quality; (2) Empowering parents; and (3) Unifying and coordinating our data. These objectives are deeply interrelated. Improving program quality helps to support parents, and, in turn, empowering parents can help drive the improvement of program quality. Meaningful and useful data is a foundational element of the quality improvement process and is also a critical tool for parents.

- *Improving program quality.* Young children in Georgia spend tens of millions of hours with program providers in Head Start, pre-k, and child care. Extensive research tells us that the quality of their experience during those hours will have a major effect on their later success. In Georgia we know that many of those hours are being spent in positive environments with supportive adults – but we also know that too many of those hours are not. Georgia has work to do in: (a) defining what quality is in a manner that ensures good outcomes for children, is widely agreed upon, and is easily understood by parents and providers; (b) ensuring that the provider community has the support necessary to achieve quality as defined by the state; and (c) providing oversight in a consistent and efficient manner, including building on the state's prior efforts to improve inter-rater reliability.
- *Empowering parents.* Parents are a child's primary educators and caregivers. Resources can be provided to all Georgia parents to help them understand the importance of the early years and the developmental needs of young children with information about what services are available for parents to help meet those needs. Parents also can benefit from being informed about what quality service means and how to look for it from a provider. The state can work to improve the coordination of its outreach to parents, which will provide more efficient service through consistent and comprehensive messaging and information.

- *Unifying and coordinating our data.* A unified early childhood data system could support parents, educators, policymakers, and researchers by helping them obtain information and data – and answer key questions – about the progress of and services for young children in Georgia. Key questions include what services children are currently accessing; what needs they have that could be met by other existing programs; and how children who received services fare in the K-12 system. In developing the system, the state's focus should be on how to make data a useful tool for those working on behalf of young children while respecting parent choice and complying with relevant privacy laws.

Georgia is currently providing some quality programming, empowering some parents, and collecting a great deal of data. But the state's program quality and outreach to parents is inconsistent, and we are deeply concerned that the children and parents requiring the most assistance from the state are often the ones least likely to receive quality service and good information. We have made strides in improving the coherence and consistency of our services, and we intend to use our grant to do more. Moreover, to truly understand the impact of our work, we must connect our various stockpiles of data in ways that make meaningful and useful information readily available.

2. The Needs Assessment

Our needs assessment will begin by articulating a vision of a coordinated system addressing the range of policies affecting children ages birth to five; the birth to five system will be the first stage of a seamless progression for children from birth through elementary school with alignment among the full range of early learning programs and K-12. Developing a meaningful vision will require the Council's high-level leadership and the engagement of a range of key stakeholders. Our vision will focus on the needs of young children and families; we will look at the population of young children in Georgia and will determine how their needs can best be met. The vision will begin and end with the importance of parents, but it must also include a discussion of the appropriate role of government and what the government's programs will look like when the Council's vision is realized.

One of the first important actions in the needs assessment process will be to provide a strong definition of program quality. This definition should be developed in consultation with key stakeholders but must be designed to lead positive outcomes for children (including school readiness and reading at grade level by third grade). The definition will help to operationalize the key concepts of program quality. One suggested definition (based on work by the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University) is as follows:

Quality is the convergence of factors in a child's environment and/or experiences that promote the child's optimal physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. In an out-of-home program setting, this requires:

- Highly skilled staff
- Small class sizes; high adult to child ratios
- Language rich environment
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Safe physical setting
- Warm, responsive interactions between children and staff
- Sensitivity to a child's individual needs
- High levels of child participation

Building on this key initial step, the Council can design systems to ensure that providers understand the definition of quality and can develop a plan for ensuring that government-funded providers ultimately have the support needed to reach the agreed-upon threshold. The Council's definition of quality should also guide its parental outreach efforts to inform parents about what quality programming is and how they can look for it. Ultimately the Council will recommend a "quality continuum" that gives parents and providers meaningful and useful information about program offerings.

The Council's vision will focus on early education and care but will also address how best to support parents in fulfilling the health, nutrition, and care needs of the youngest Georgians. The responsibility of parents to their children will be of primary importance to the Council, and discussions of government programs will be in the context of how to support parents in fulfilling their responsibilities. Among government programs, Head Start provides a range of support services, and the partnership between Head Start and pre-k has helped to expand the scope of service provision, but more could be done to make comprehensive services portable – so they follow the child who needs them across programs. We also know that many of our youngest children would benefit from high-quality comprehensive services that are currently unavailable, particularly given research showing that the most significant brain development occurs in the first 18 months of life. So while our vision will incorporate all of the Council's objectives, we will have a special focus on improving the quality of the services available to Georgia parents for their young children.

Once our vision has been articulated, we can assess Georgia's need by comparing the vision to the current reality. Georgia has already established itself as a leader in self-evaluating its current reality, including the forthcoming release of a study by the Frank Porter Graham Center at the University of North Carolina regarding the quality of Georgia's child care. Our needs assessment will include a thorough review of where we currently stand based in large part on research that has already been completed. We

know that we have some real strengths, including Georgia's Pre-K Program, and that many children receive quality education and care – but we also know that we have farther to go, and our needs assessment will honestly inform where we have work to do.

After we establish the vision and the current reality, we will articulate a roadmap for getting from where we are to where we want to go. We will build off of our progress and the lessons we have learned, including our successes and challenges in implementing pre-k statewide. The comprehensive plan will identify the resource levels needed to achieve the stated goals, recognizing that the current fiscal climate does not allow for the immediate infusion of additional resources. Because of that, the plan will address the utilization of existing resources, and may suggest repurposing funds where they can more effectively serve the state's goals. Our discussion of resources will also identify the proper role for parents, as well as federal, state, and local governments. Our plan will identify federal and state barriers that must be overcome to achieve the long term vision, and will suggest legal and regulatory changes necessary for the plan to be implemented.

The comprehensive plan is meant to provide a long-term vision for Georgia, but we know that for the long term vision to be realized, a lot of work needs to happen immediately. For the Council's recommendations to have an impact on the lives of young children, they need to be translated into policy change; where we identify policies that are not consistent with our vision for young children, we will recommend changing the policies to improve child outcomes.

B. Strategies for Increasing the Number of Children Entering Kindergarten Ready to Learn

For each of our objectives, the policy changes needed to improve conditions in Georgia will involve multiple elements, and strategies will be needed for each of those elements. The following discussion describes the elements we see as critical and where Georgia policy currently stands on each element.

1. Improving Program Quality

Not all children are enrolled in programs outside the home – but for those who are, the quality of their experience in that program can play a significant role in determining whether they enter school ready. There are many elements of a successful early childhood program, and in recent years Georgia has focused increasingly on the key elements of a quality early learning system. The following elements meet two important criteria for inclusion in our federal grant application: one, they make a major contribution to school readiness on a system-wide basis; and two, they are areas where the Council's expertise and focus can make the most difference with regard to improving policy and child outcomes.

a. Staff Qualifications and Higher Education Capacity

Georgia recognizes that the most important determinant in the experience of young children is the engagement of adults around them. When those adults are employees in government-funded programs, the government has an obligation to help ensure that those adults are qualified and trained to perform their jobs properly. This requires state agencies to partner with higher education institutions and providers – among others – to ensure that educators and caregivers are in a position to succeed.

The state has already taken numerous steps to change regulations in ways that lead to improved personnel quality. The state's efforts to date have focused on raising the qualifications floor. On an ongoing basis, Georgia needs to consider the appropriate minimum requirements for personnel in programs for young children, and the Council should remain abreast of the implementation of new rules with an eye toward the evolution of those rules in the future. The Council can also play a cross-agency role in helping to bring consistency to the requirements for providers in multiple programs.

The Council will also go beyond discussions of minimum quality. With state agencies, private providers, and higher education at the same table, the conversation should move beyond "floor" and into how Georgia can create a market where quality personnel are properly valued. In the future, providers should have a much easier time identifying and hiring quality personnel, and higher education should be training those quality personnel. But providers alone cannot build this system, nor should higher education be expected to mobilize in support of a market that does not yet exist. Only through working together can systemic personnel change be brought about.

b. Professional Development

Professional development has been a significant area of focus for Georgia. Georgia has spent extensive effort developing a Professional Development System, including a teacher registry. Ultimately, the system will be a tool for teachers to identify the professional development that suits their needs and for the state to help ensure program quality. The state has in place a trainer approval system that ensures that trainers are competent to provide instruction and assigns trainers to levels based on their credentials. Professional development is approved if the trainer is qualified and the professional development satisfies the needs of the provider. In addition, Georgia has identified "career levels" that can help inform teacher professional development choices.

While it is essential to plan for the early childhood workforce of the future, the state's professional development offerings must recognize and support the many talented and hard working early childhood personnel currently in place.

c. Learning Standards

Governor Perdue is a national leader in the effort to develop common and internationally benchmarked state K-12 learning standards, a key element of the U.S. Department of Education's "Race to the Top" initiative. His national leadership builds on the work already undertaken in Georgia – led by Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox and the State Board of Education – to improve the rigor of K-12 standards and

develop new curriculum. To improve student outcomes, it is essential that learning standards operate in a smooth continuum anchored by age-appropriate standards for young children at one end and college- and career-readiness at the other. The end goal for Georgia should be to have the following progression of research-based standards:

- Age-appropriate learning standards for our youngest children, ages birth through five that ensure their readiness for kindergarten.
- Early elementary standards that build on the early learning standards while preparing children for the rigorous work ahead in middle and high school.
- High school standards anchored to college and career readiness with an aligned progression of standards in middle school that prepare students for a rigorous high school experience. Work underway in the common state standards initiative will identify a model for state college- and career-ready standards. Georgia has signed onto the common core initiative.

Georgia's commitment to standards-based reform has already been extended to early learning. Georgia has initiated work to articulate learning standards from birth through age five defining age-appropriate standards for children before pre-k and kindergarten entry. In addition, Georgia is initiating work to articulate reading standards from birth through third grade. The review includes Georgia Early Learning Standards, Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards, Head Start Child Outcomes, and Georgia Performance Standards for kindergarten through third grade; the project will also study alignment between the pre-k content standards and the work sampling assessments used in Georgia's Pre-K Program. The purpose is to ensure deep alignment that starts with birth-to-five programs and continues through the early elementary grades based on developmentally-appropriate practices for young children and the revised early elementary standards based on the common core. These efforts will help establish Georgia as a national leader in providing a seamless progression of learning standards for children throughout their academic careers.

d. Curriculum

While the standards represent a baseline expectation for what students are expected to know and do, quality curriculum is what really drives classroom instruction. Curriculum should be aligned to the standards and should help teachers guide their students in developmentally appropriate ways. Early learners develop in multiple domains and at different paces, and ideally, teachers will be able to provide instruction that reaches children where they are and helps them to grow to the best of their ability. Programs in Georgia should have access to good choices of research-based curricula that allow teachers to educate young children in developmentally appropriate ways.

e. Assessment

Georgia uses a work sampling assessment in Georgia's Pre-K Program, and other research-based assessment tools are used in Head Start programs. State leadership in

developing and implementing assessment is critical at this time; early learning assessment is a powerful tool for improving child outcomes but only if it is implemented properly, and the results are used for appropriate purposes. The rollout of assessment in the state pre-k program has been successful, but the state could now consider how to use research-based assessments in a wider range of settings.

Additionally, work is underway to correlate work sampling with Georgia's GKIDS (Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills) kindergarten assessment. Children and educators will benefit from state assessments that are an integrated part of a coherent assessment plan, and in the coming years Georgia will have the opportunity to build on its initial efforts in that important work.

f. Program Oversight and Monitoring

Each state agency works to ensure that local programs serving young children are properly fulfilling their responsibilities. Done correctly, monitoring can be a valuable way for the state and local programs to communicate how best to serve children and is the process by which the state tracks the impact of its investment in a range of programs. Done incorrectly, monitoring is a series of disconnected visits from state inspectors that take on a punitive tone and can leave providers in a tangle of overlapping and inconsistent mandates. In a time of limited resources, the state must ensure not only that programs use state funds effectively but that the state itself connects with those programs in the manner best calculated to use everyone's time effectively and to communicate effectively about serving children.

In Georgia, the current scope of monitoring is often limited and does not adequately support some of the service providers that might need the most assistance. In some instances the state has difficulty finding and retaining qualified personnel to perform the monitoring. In other instances quality personnel are available, but the state simply has no resources to provide oversight.

Georgia has begun improving its oversight and monitoring. In a state as large as Georgia, one significant issue is inter-rater reliability, and the state has done extensive work to ensure reliability in its pre-k program; that work can be extended to include child care and other programs. In addition the state has redone the mapping of child care services and completed a revised child care and referral system based on performance measures. These measures are meant to ensure that program offerings are part of a system, not just a series of unconnected services.

Improving monitoring is not simply a matter of hiring more personnel and sending them to observe programs. Improved monitoring will start with improved data analysis to identify programs with issues that need to be addressed. Then the state – in a manner coordinated across agencies and funding streams – should identify those programs with the greatest need, and mobilize monitoring that is undertaken by trained personnel and addresses the specific issues identified. That way, monitoring personnel will utilize their time more effectively, and the time spent with individual programs will have a greater impact on child outcomes. For that reason local programs should be involved in the design of new monitoring protocols to ensure that the process is not an adversarial compliance exercise but is a tool for driving needed improvement.

g. Health Screening and Healthy Development

Health screening for children enrolled in early care and education programs is a widely acknowledged best practice. State pre-k and Head Start are among the existing programs that offer screening, and Georgia should work to ensure that screening is offered in the most coordinated and efficient manner. This could include expanding screening for infants and toddlers, who are typically the most in need of developmental screening and the least likely to be enrolled in programs that offer it.

More importantly, Georgia should develop plans for following up on the results obtained in health screenings. Children who are identified through screening as requiring health services are not necessarily provided with those services, and the state should develop plans for ensuring that screenings lead to care. Additionally, Georgia currently has no data that captures the results of the existing screening to identify what resources are needed. Improved data could lead to better mobilization of resources at the state and local level and could involve a mix of government agencies and private service providers.

h. Coordination and Integration

A theme that runs through many of the quality elements here is that of coordination and integration. Georgia recognizes that agencies must work together to improve their services. Some of our policies and practices might benefit from a rethinking that starts from the perspective of the provider, the local superintendent, or the parent. Our action agenda will recognize the need to provide service in a consistent and seamless manner.

2. Empowering Parents

Programs outside the home play an important role in supporting child development but not the primary role. Parents play the most important role in the development of their children, and to improve school readiness statewide will require improving support for parents. Many parents are eager to do everything they can for their children but are unaware of how a child's brain develops and what they can do to encourage their child's well-being. Several state agencies and many local providers have focused on improving parent engagement and family outreach. For parents who do enroll their children in programs, the most successful programs will be those that help parents improve their ability to become lifelong advocates for their children.

In Georgia, we recognize that parent engagement needs to occur on at least two levels:

- One is informing all parents about resources available to them as they raise their child – resources that include but are not limited to government programs. Many parents want to be involved but suffer either from not having enough information about the services they can access or from having so much information they cannot make sense of it. The action agenda should develop plans to ensure that parents have *useful* information to help guide their choices.
- Another is to ensure that in government-funded programs parents work with the program providers to ensure that children receive high-quality and consistent support. If parents and providers work as a team focused on the child's development, the child's long-term outcomes improve.

Informing parents about available resources can occur in several dimensions and build on the work of existing Georgia programs. For example, Georgia's Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies play a key role in connecting parents to the right services for their children, and Georgia's Pre-K Program resource coordinators serve more than 50,000 children. Family services were provided to another 28,000 families through Head Start. The state should provide some resources developed across agencies that provide simple and complete information to all parents. These resources will ultimately include information about the quality ratings of programs and how parents can choose programs that are high-quality and will support their child's development. In addition, other resources could be targeted by region or community, or to parents of children with particular needs (for example, parents in homes where the primary language is not English). Finally, when the state has improved its ability to use data, it can design targeted outreach to parents based on the specific needs of their children as long as that outreach is sensitive to the role of the parent and is in accordance with all relevant privacy laws.

Once children are enrolled in programs, the state can partner with parents on issues relating to child development. Many programs have a parental support component, but those components may not be consistent within programs, let alone across programs. Working collaboratively, the state can design high-quality outreach to parents of young children that will be consistent across programs (and coordinated for parents whose children are in multiple programs). Improved outreach will help parents ensure that their children are in the right programs; help them understand how their children can best benefit from the program or programs they are in; and help them learn how to advocate for their children in future programs and the public schools.

3. Unifying and coordinating our data

Improving school readiness will require improvements in the state's use of data about children, providers, and programs. Better data will allow Georgia to target its limited resources to those strategies most likely to improve school readiness and to support

educators and parents in their efforts to use resources most efficiently. Linking data among state agencies will allow us to answer some key questions that right now the state simply cannot answer. While federal law obligates the Council to prepare a recommendation for a "unified" early childhood data system, it is important to note that "unified" does not have to mean "unitary" – states are focusing on fulfilling this obligation by linking existing systems rather than attempting to create new systems that would require major upheaval in numerous state agencies.

Linking data across agencies can have numerous positive outcomes:

- For parents, connecting data can make it easier for them to access services. For example, linked data could be used to create a "passport" that parents could use in working with state agencies and funded programs (an idea discussed at the first Council meeting).
- For educators and providers, linked data could help them understand the needs of the children they serve. That allows them to serve the children more effectively – and potentially connect children to other available resources.
- For state policymakers, linked data can help them manage resources more efficiently and better understand the impact of their actions.
- For researchers, early learning data connected to the longitudinal data system will allow for greater exploration of the effects of early experiences on later outcomes.

Accordingly, the state's use of data should focus on identifying what it wants to use data to accomplish and then building data supports that help the system meet its operating goals. For example, in early childhood, one major challenge is identifying which children are being served by which programs. The First Lady's Children's Cabinet has been exploring the idea of a voluntary "Children's Passport" that would provide basic information about children across agencies and domains – health information (such as immunizations), information about enrollment in public supports and social services (such as Medicaid or WIC), and enrollment in early education and care. The use of a passport would make it easier for parents to access programs and help programs better understand the needs of children and the opportunities to serve them.

A unified early learning data system should have horizontal and vertical dimensions. First, the state can connect data horizontally across agencies for children in the same age cohort to give a much richer understanding of what is actually happening with children prior to school entry (particularly in the critical infant-toddler years). That information should then be connected vertically to K-12 longitudinal data that then flows into higher education and workforce data. The vertical connection will depend on the use of a unique student identifier, which children are currently assigned in Georgia's Pre-K Program. Georgia has long been a leader in developing its longitudinal data

system, and strengthening the connection of early learning data to the K-12 system will significantly benefit parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers.

In addition to data that helps mobilize resources on behalf of children, the state's early learning workforce has a different set of data needs. Improved workforce data could help identify system needs but should also help individual providers. For example, improved statewide data collection about personnel could benefit programs by allowing for greater certainty in the hiring process and tracking ongoing professional development. Georgia is currently updating its professional development registry, which will meet some of these needs in a user-friendly fashion.

Unifying and coordinating data is a policy area where the Council's convening role can be used effectively. Data linkages require partnerships among multiple agencies to serve multiple audiences; designing a unified system must be a collaborative enterprise. The Council's purpose must not be to take away agency control of existing data but to build linkages that allow agencies (and university partners) to use data most effectively. Multi-agency data partnerships also require new governance structures, and Georgia has already launched work on a new governance structure as part of its obligations under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of the ARRA; the Council's work can build on what has already been accomplished. The Alliance of Education Agency Heads has played a leadership role in improving linkages among state education agencies, and the Council can coordinate with and build on that work in an effort that will also include numerous social service agencies.

In addition to governance issues, important privacy issues will need to be addressed in a linked data system. From a technical standpoint states have looked at ways to give different users different levels of access to data systems to ensure that users only can see data that is legal and appropriate for them to see. Once the Council identifies its policy goals for a data system and designs a linked system with the technical capabilities to meet Georgia's needs, it should undertake a legal analysis to ensure that the system properly protects the privacy of children with data in the system; the final system implementation must include the safeguards needed to protect that data.

Ultimately, the measure of a state data system is not what it collects but what it produces. The state's early learning data system should be designed to meet the needs of the people who are (and should be) using it to improve outcomes for young children. Georgia needs a unified early learning data system that provides parents with the information they need to advocate on behalf of their children; educators with the information they need to serve those children; and policymakers with the information they need to manage the state's resources. Indeed, an improved data system is necessary for the Council to map out and complete its own work, as the improved data system will help track the state's progress toward quality improvement. The unified data system's implementation must also address the privacy and security concerns that must be dealt with for any data system.

C. *Activities Planned By the Council to Increase the Number of Children Entering Kindergarten Ready to Learn*

Having identified the critical elements needed to achieve each objective, we turn to the activities we believe are needed in Georgia to advance policy in those areas. For each activity, we have identified what the federal funds will be used for, what the Council's role will be, and how other resources will be leveraged to achieve policy change.

1. Improving Program Quality

The definition of quality will be designed to ensure positive outcomes for children, such as entering school ready to learn and reading at grade level by third grade. While there are numerous elements of quality, those elements are best considered in the context of a comprehensive plan; none of these elements on their own are sufficient to guarantee program quality, and a comprehensive plan can discuss how they interrelate. The Council's commitment is to define quality in a manner that recognizes the many developmental needs of young children and the fact that both cognitive and non-cognitive development is essential to a child's ultimate success in school and beyond.

a. The Needs Assessment: A Comprehensive Plan

Federal law requires the Council to produce a "needs assessment," and to truly assess the state's needs requires the Council to articulate a vision for the level and nature of service that should be provided. The needs assessment should be complementary to – and build off of – other state policy initiatives, including the recently-filed Race to the Top application.

i. The Council should lead a statewide conversation about the needs of young children and their families. As part of that conversation, the Council should identify which needs are appropriately served by government-funded programs. This discussion will involve public meetings in different parts of the state with invitations sent to a wide range of constituents to participate.

ii. To ensure that the conversation builds on existing efforts to obtain feedback from parents and families, Council staff will coordinate with existing parent advisory councils for agencies and programs. Council staff will develop an inventory of existing parent advisory council activities to help inform Council members and will invite parent advisory groups to participate in the Council's process. The Council will also coordinate with the Georgia Council on Aging and the National Center on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren to ensure that grandparents and seniors have the opportunity to participate in the Council's work.

iii. Based on its expertise and the feedback received from the public, the Council should outline a vision for providing service to young children in Georgia. The plan will be aspirational and long-term (five to 10 years) with the idea that, while resources may not be currently available to implement major elements of the plan, having the plan will allow the state to make better decisions about its current use of resources.

iv. On a parallel track to the conversations contemplated in paragraphs i-iii., the state will establish baselines of which children are participating in which programs and the quality of those programs.

v. With the vision and baseline data in hand, the Council will develop a roadmap for getting from where the state is to where it plans to be. That roadmap will include recommendations for yearly benchmarks to ensure the state is progressing toward its vision.

vi. Based on the agreed-upon definition of quality, the Council will make recommendations for developing and maintaining a Georgia quality continuum; for providing supports to providers to reach the expected level of quality; and for providing public information about the state's quality improvement efforts. The Council will specifically discuss the level of resources needed to implement the definition of quality given the state's goals for child access to existing programs.

vii. The Council will identify any barriers in federal or state law to the implementation of its vision.

viii. The Council will also design a process for continually updating the comprehensive plan and needs assessment in future years.

The Council's role will be to drive high-level policy conversation. The comprehensive plan and needs assessment will not ultimately be a series of program-centered wish lists but will instead be a parent- and child-focused document. Federal grant funding will be used to support the process of holding public hearings around the state, preparing a report, and ensuring that the report is disseminated.

b. Key Elements of Quality to Address

Many of the essential elements of program quality will naturally be discussed as part of the comprehensive planning process described in IV.C.1 above. The state's overall work to develop a quality continuum will impact each of the areas described below, and as part of its work on each of these areas, the Council will develop specific recommendations to guide future policy change.

- *Staff Qualifications and Higher Education Capacity:* The Council will identify the staff qualifications needed to successfully execute the comprehensive plan. The Council's work will seek to bring coherence to the staff qualifications in multiple programs while recognizing that different programs play different roles and at this time will appropriately have some differences in provider qualifications. Once the Council has identified the qualifications of the Georgia early childhood workforce needed to implement its vision, it will use the updated professional development registry to determine how much of the vision has been realized. The baseline information in the registry can be used to develop a gap analysis. Based on the gap analysis, the Council will work with its provider partners to understand what market conditions will be needed to bring the right personnel into the early childhood field.
 - The Council will, on a parallel track, measure the higher education pipeline producing qualified personnel for the field. Assuming a gap between the end-goal needs of the field and the current capacity of higher education, the Council will work with its higher education partners and others to plan for an increase in higher education capacity.
 - As with the needs assessment, the Council's role will be to drive high-level conversation. We expect that, from a process standpoint, this particular issue will be largely included in the overall needs assessment discussion, because quality personnel are so central to any goals the Council might wish to achieve in the comprehensive plan. This will be a high-priority area within the planning process.
- *Professional Development:* Georgia has already made strides to improve professional development but can continue to evaluate how professional development should look for multiple programs, potentially using that opportunity to push for greater consistency across programs. There may also be opportunities to coordinate professional development for early learning personnel with professional development for teachers in the early elementary grades, so each group can learn from each other.
- *Learning Standards:* Georgia has already done major work to create appropriate, research-based learning standards for early learning. At this time, however, Georgia – like most states – is awaiting the results of the Common State Standards initiative, which may involve the state making meaningful changes to its K-12 standards. The early learning standards must be high-quality and age appropriate, but because it is important that they be articulated to the K-12 standards, any revisions to the K-12 standards will naturally trigger some review at the early learning level. The Council should ensure that the junction point between early learning and K-12 standards is at the appropriate place and that the progression of

standards that begins with early learners continues on an appropriate trajectory through the early elementary grades.

- At this time, the full impact of the Common State Standards initiative is not clear. Accordingly, the state will develop a more specific plan for updating its standards when the timeline for the Common State Standards has crystallized further to ensure that the standard review process is as efficient as possible. In the meantime the needs assessment will include attention to the implementation of learning standards in multiple programs with the expectation that the state will continue to maintain high-quality early learning standards. As part of that process, the state will identify ways to ensure that providers have access to high-quality curricula based on the most up-to-date standards.
- *Assessment:* With the implementation of the Pre-K Child Assessment underway, major changes in assessment policy are not a priority for the Council at this time. However, under the Council's auspices, the agencies responsible for implementing assessment will convene experts and stakeholders to discuss how assessments could best be implemented and aligned.
- *Program Oversight and Monitoring:* The state successfully executing its oversight role will be a critical part of the success of any comprehensive plan. As part of the state's needs assessment, the Council will identify the state's role in ensuring program quality and articulate what resources the state will need to deploy to ensure quality as programs evolve and expand. This will include recommendations for cross-agency partnerships that best leverage state funding and personnel.
- *Health Screening and Healthy Development:* The most critical issue facing Georgia in health screening is not in performing the initial screening – it is in ensuring that child needs identified through the screening are acted upon. Part of the data work described below will be to identify ways to capture information from screenings and in a legal and appropriate manner ensure that parents are connected to health care providers who can act on the results of those screenings. The Council will help design a unified data system and plan that can support work to improve the outcomes from health screening.
- *Coordination and Integration:* Coordinating and integrating offerings from the state is a key Council responsibility, and one that must be woven into each element of the Council's plans. No specific federal funds will be earmarked for this task, but the Council will approach all of its work with an eye toward parent- and child-centered plans for state service delivery.

2. Empowering Parents

Based on the identified strategies, activities to improve the empowerment of parents include the following:

- a. The Council will request that state agency staff take an inventory of existing parent outreach efforts through multiple programs. With that inventory in hand, the Council will set a policy direction for staff to design an improved and aligned system of parent communication across multiple programs.
- b. The Council will engage in outreach to existing parent advisory councils for government agencies and programs to ensure that their ideas are incorporated into the Council's plans for parental outreach.
- c. The Council will develop a plan to inform all parents of the services offered by the state. Federal grant funds will be used to help create and disseminate these resources. A fuller description of how the Council might approach this work is included in a separate memorandum.
- d. The Council should identify particular populations in Georgia that might need specific kinds of programs or parental outreach and define a small set of priority populations for targeted resources. Federal funds can then be used to develop the outreach resources needed to reach those parents.
- e. The Council will ensure that the data work (described below) is cognizant of the need to support parental outreach.
- f. The Council will coordinate with the United Way of Metro Atlanta's Early Education Commission's plans to build public awareness, so that the efforts can be aligned as part of a larger strategy. The Commission's initiative should then be counted as part of Georgia's local match in its application for state advisory council funds.

3. Unifying and coordinating our data

Georgia anticipates using federal grant funds to support its efforts to coordinate data about children, providers, and programs. In doing so, the Council will ensure that its work is aligned with other statewide data initiatives and commitments, including Georgia's commitments under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of the ARRA, its longitudinal data systems grant from the Institute of Education Sciences, and its Race to the Top application. The action steps the Council plans include:

- a. Identifying key end users, including parents, educators, providers, researchers, and state policymakers.
- b. Once key end users have been identified, the Council will encourage staff to work with those end users to develop key questions that end users have that could be answered through early learning data linkages. This effort will build on national and other state efforts to identify the key questions that a unified data system should be able to answer. The process should be cognizant of the fact that different audiences will need different kinds of evidence to help them make decisions.
- c. After a preliminary set of key questions have been identified, staff will present that list to the Council for discussion. Staff will include in that presentation a

list of the data elements needed to answer those questions, which agencies collect any of those elements in any form, and which elements the state does not currently collect.

d. The primary use of federal funds in this area would then be to answer the technical question of how data could be linked across agencies. While multi-agency data linkages raise many policy and governance and technical issues, the Council has the policy expertise to work on resolving those issues. However, technical expertise will be needed to identify how data could be linked across agencies and what elements would need to be added to a linked system. As part of that effort, the state can also look for opportunities to reduce overlapping data burdens on those who help populate the system. Federal grant funds would be used to hire technical experts to analyze the state's existing data infrastructure and begin designing the technical infrastructure needed for the unified system contemplated by federal law.

e. With the technical information in hand, the Council can address the policy and governance issues raised by a unified system and design a roadmap for the state to implement a system that is useful to end users, technically sound, practical to administer at the state level, not unduly burdensome to local providers, and complies with all appropriate privacy laws.

It is clear that with the amount of money provided through the state advisory council grants, Georgia cannot design AND implement a unified early childhood data system. Thus, the focus of the grant proposal is on the design work. While it is unlikely that state funds will be available for implementation any time soon, there have been a variety of federally-funded data initiatives in both education and human services; having a plan for a well-designed system would allow Georgia to identify funding opportunities from federal and private sources and use those funds as part of a larger plan, rather than as stand-alone initiatives. Ideally, the unified data system in its final form will be no more expensive to maintain than Georgia's current data systems and may even be less expensive; however, there will undoubtedly be some transition costs to a redesigned system, and federal funds may help make the transition possible.

V. Conclusion

Our action agenda defines specific objectives for the Council, specific strategies to achieve those objectives, and specific activities to support our strategies. As shown on the following table, this action agenda will comply with all of the substantive requirements of the Head Start Act and the supporting application materials from HHS. If the Council approves this outline, staff will prepare a full draft application based on its contents.

The action agenda contemplates the following primary expenditures of federal grant funds:

- *Supporting the process by which the Council develops and disseminates a comprehensive plan for early childhood services in Georgia.* The plan will fulfill several statutory requirements, including the requirement to conduct a needs assessment, to make recommendations to improve the preparedness of children for kindergarten entry, to make

recommendations to enhance existing services, and to make recommendations for increasing overall participation (including outreach to underrepresented and special populations). The process will be driven primarily by time spent by Council members, agency staff, and members of the early childhood field and public, which will not be paid for by grant funds. However, grant funds will assist with the hard costs of the process and with paying outside experts who can support the process.

GRANT OUTCOME: A comprehensive plan for service to young children in Georgia, including numerous elements focused on increasing quality and enrollment; the results of pilots to improve coordinated professional development; and a plan to provide health supports for children identified through screening in early learning programs.

- *Supporting parental outreach.* While the Council's volunteer members will approve the messages and scope of an outreach plan, federal funds will be used to help support communication with parents, and the development of tools to support that communication.
GRANT OUTCOME: More parents informed about how to recognize quality programs and about the reasons for enrolling their children in a program that will lead to increased school readiness.
- *Supporting the process of linking data.* Because better data is so central to so much of what the state needs to accomplish, federal grant funds will be used to hire technical experts to ensure that it is technically feasible to accomplish Georgia's policy goals.
GRANT OUTCOME: The design of a plan to implement a unified data system that is sound from a policy standpoint and is technically feasible – and the pilot-testing of that plan.

All of these expenditures can be utilized within the grant period, and in each instance, if the state is unable to continue funding beyond the grant period, no services to children will be affected or reduced. Clearly if these efforts are successful, Georgia will need to consider how best to sustain them, but all of the grant expenditures can nonetheless be treated as discrete activities to be completed within three years.

Throughout the process, the Council's role will be to set high-level direction for the work; to drive the comprehensive planning process; and to approve detailed implementation plans presented by staff as needed. The application requires a detailed plan for the Council's activities, which will be presented at the next meeting and will incorporate feedback from the Council's comments on this outline.

Summary Table: Application Requirements and Georgia's Action Agenda¹

Required Element	Georgia's Action Agenda
<i>Statutory Requirements of the Council</i>	
Conduct a needs assessment	IV.A.2; IV.C.1
Identify opportunities for collaboration	IV.B.1.a,b,f,g,h; IV.C.2.b,d,e,f,g; IV.C.2; IV.C.3
Increase overall participation, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations	IV.A.1; IV.B.2; IV.C.1; IV.C.2
Unified data system	IV.A.1; IV.B.1.f; IV.B.3; IV.C.1.b; IV.C.3
Statewide professional development	IV.B.1.b; IV.C.1.b
Assess higher ed capacity	IV.B.1.a; IV.C.1.b
Improve early learning standards	IV.B.1.c; IV.C.1.b
<i>Statutory Requirements for the Grant</i>	
Promote preparedness of children for school entry	IV.A.1; IV.B.1; IV.B.2; IV.C.1
Support professional development, recruitment, and retention initiatives	IV.B.1.b; IV.B.1.a; IV.C.1.b
Enhance existing services	IV.A.1; IV.B.1,2; IV.C.1,2
<i>Requirements in the HHS Application</i>	
Focus on outcomes and convey strategies for achieving performance	IV.B
Clearly identify the need requiring a solution and articulate objectives with reference to current conditions	IV.A
Have a plan of action explaining how the work will be conducted	IV.C

¹ This table does not address each of the procedural requirements of the application – instead, it summarizes what policy steps must be called for in the state's action agenda, and the policy steps Georgia would take to fulfill that requirement. The draft application provided at the next meeting will include the supporting materials necessary to address the statutory and administrative filing requirements.

ENDNOTES

- i All data in this paragraph comes from the National Center on Children in Poverty's state data profile on low-income young children, available at <http://www.nccp.org/profiles/>.
- ii Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, reports on population movement, available at <http://pewsocialtrends.org/maps/migration/>.
- iii National Center on Children in Poverty's state data profile, n. 1 above.
- iv *The State of Preschool 2008*, National Institute for Early Education Research, Barnett et. al., available on-line at <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>, at pp. 48-49 (Georgia profile).
- v *Child Care Participation State Profile*, Georgia state profile, Center for Law and Social Policy, available on-line at http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states?id=0010.
- vi *Id.*
- vii *The State of Preschool 2008*, n. iv above, at pp. 246-47.
- viii *The State of Preschool 2008*, n. iv above. Georgia's profile is on pages 48-49, and comparative data was derived from a review of profiles for the nation as a whole and other states. The NIEER data shows 9% of Georgia three year olds enrolled in Head Start, and 7% of four year olds; in fact, more recent data from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning shows that the percentage of three year olds enrolled has jumped to 9.8%, and the percentage of four year olds has increased to 8%.
- ix *Id.*
- x *Head Start by the Numbers*, Georgia state profile, Center for Law and Social Policy, available on-line at http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states?id=0010, at p.2.
- xi *Id.*
- xii *Id.* at p. 1.
- xiii United States Census data, www.census.gov.
- xiv *Head Start by the Numbers*, Georgia state profile, n. vi above, at p. 2.